

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 10, 2014

Agenda Item: American Marten Translocation to the Belt Mountains

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement to Proceed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

The purpose of this proposed action is for FWP to translocate American (or pine) marten into suitable habitat in the Belt Mountains to establish a resident population. There has been a high level of uncertainty over the past several decades if marten occupied the Little Belts historically or at the present time. A translocation by FWP did occur into the Big Belts in the late 1950s. A handful of observation or track records exist but are unverified and no FWP harvest records have been found. In 1995 a juvenile male was harvested from the adjacent Crazy Mountains to the southeast.

This proposed translocation, if successful, would increase species diversity and facilitate American marten range expansion into the mountains of central Montana.

Public Involvement Process & Results

If this proposal is endorsed by the Commission, FWP would more formally evaluate this translocation to include an Environmental Assessment (EA). This would include public notice and opportunity for review and comment. Landowners, county Commissions, land management agencies and the general public would be provided opportunities to participate.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposed translocation of American marten, if successful, could provide another wildlife species in the Belt Mountains. Given the island like nature of the Belts, natural colonization is very unlikely. This Commission approval would only endorse a more thorough evaluation.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends further evaluation of a translocation of American marten from a source population in western Montana to the Belt Mountains of central Montana. This would be the first translocation of marten in over 50 years. The Belts appear to have suitable habitat to establish a self-sustaining population. This translocation will require additional habitat assessment and public notice and review to determine release site locations and an evaluation of potential source populations. Limited monitoring would be conducted on released individual marten to assess movements and survival.

Proposed Motion

I move that FWP proceed with a full evaluation of the translocation of American marten to the Belt Mountains.